

TO AN OLD HOUSE

By Alison Arnold

One day last fall while I was gathering a few stalks of golden-rod growing by the roadside, a car drew up. An irate woman leaned out and shrieked at me: "All you

new people spoil our countryside. Go back where you belong!" As she drove on, I began to wonder where, but in Duxbury, I belong?

From 1907 until 1962 I came to Duxbury every summer. Since 1962 I have been living here all



Looking East on Surplus St. Mrs. Arnold's house is 2nd on the left.

year 'round in the house my father bought in 1913 from Percy Walker for \$3,000 -- a good price at that time. My children spent their summers here in the old house and now have houses of their own in Duxbury and their children go to Duxbury schools.

Back in 1891 my grandparents rented for the summer the Capt. Adams house on Powder Point Ave., recently owned by Mrs. Frank Christian. They could have bought it then for \$2,000, including all the land that extended back to the cove. But my grandmother didn't like the house.

However, the charm of Duxbury caused her to spend part of the summer of 1903 at Powder Point Hall as the Powder Point School was called in summer. The original building burned down later and was replaced by the Old Sailors' Home, which has just been torn down.

In 1927 my parents decided to sell the Duxbury house and move to Connecticut. About that time

my husband and I were looking for a house for the summer and bought it from Percy Walker for \$8,500.

Back in 1913 the house had no electricity, no running water and no heat. There was a hand pump in the black iron sink in the kitchen and an "outhouse" in the shed, and light was provided by candles and kerosene lamps.

During the years this has been remedied, but most of the old features have been retained -- wide pine floors, fireplaces, latches and HL hinges. So Benjamin Bosworth, who built the house in 1794, would recognize it easily.

Thanks to Dorothy Wentworth, the town historian, I have learned a lot about Benjamin. He was brought up in a house on Soule Ave., now owned by Stephen Simpson Jr. Benjamin was only 6 when his widowed mother came from Boston to marry James Soule.

Soule was young and started a shipbuilding business at the foot

of Soule Ave. But he died in 1794 at the age of 48, leaving a wife and 5 children and his stepson, Benjamin Bosworth.

It was only a good walk by the old meeting house path for Benjamin to court Mercy Prior, who lived just south of the meeting house on Chestnut St. The house is not there now. Benjamin and Mercy were married in 1791. Her sister, Joanna, became the bride of Joshua Cushing on Sept. 11.

Joshua bought 6 acres of Ebenezer Delano's farm on the shore end of the farm and began building ships. In 1792 he built a house for his bride. This house is now owned by Herbert Kelley. Mercy wanted to be near her sister, so in 1794, Benjamin bought a lot for 7 pounds, 16 shillings on the north side of a well-traveled cartway that is now Surplus St. The lot was surrounded by other lots from the Delano farm and there was a right of way through Bumblebee Lane to a town landing on Water St. There still is.

On this lot Benjamin built a 2-story framed house with the same general floor plan of the times. However, 'being his own builder, he allowed himself a little personal design in his own house.

The kitchen is in the center of the rear of the house with a buttry on one end and the usual small burning room on the other. But Benjamin made a short addition to the kitchen extending beyond the rear wall like a mini-ell. The big old fireplace and brick oven were in that ell part of the kitchen rather than in the central chimney.

When Benjamin and Mercy moved into the house they had a 2-year-old daughter, Abigail, and a year-old son, Benjamin, whose twin brother had died at 12 days old. From 1795 to 1811 8 children were born in the house -- Hiram, Sally, Mercy, Betsey, Nathaniel,

Joshua, Mary and William. Sally died in the house in 1799 at the age of 2.

Mercy and Joanna visited back and forth as their houses were so near. Washington St. hadn't been cut through then so there was no street to cross. They swapped recipes and helped each other through bouts of chicken pox and measles and the Bosworth children became great friends of the Cushing children.

Benjamin had prosperous relatives -- his well-to-do mother, a very well off half brother, James, who ran the shipping business his father started, another half brother, Richard, who became a master mariner and sent his son to Harvard and his daughter to a private school in Hingham, and a father-in-law who owned one of the first big Duxbury shipyards and was of a very good family.

When Benjamin sold his house in 1823, the boundaries show that he had lost a rod to the east to a new road that was cut through in 1800 and is now Washington St. For many years the house was owned by Henry Sampson and his brother, William. Henry lived in the house and William lived on Water St.

They were merchants and had many enterprises, including a wharf, coastwise trade and a grocery store, which they operated just to the north of their lot, where the Walter Princes now live. Later this house became the store of William Peterson, who sold groceries there until the building was bought by the late Winthrop Coffin and remodeled into a house in 1930.

The Samsons altered their house to accommodate 2 families and still later it became a boarding house to take advantage of summer visitors, although I can't imagine that there was half enough room. None of the alterations changed the house much and when it went again into

private family ownership, it needed only a refurbishing, not a restoration.

My father bought it in 1913 from Miss Frances Eaton, who wrote children's books. Her family had used it as a summer home for 18 years.

I like to think of all the living that has gone on in the old house and all the joys and sorrows it has known. And I like to know that Mercy Prior went up and down the time-worn stairs, heard the winter wind moan in the big chimney, and saw the robins hopping on the lawn in summer. And I like to think I belong in Duxbury.

1914

A rather peculiar accident occurred yesterday afternoon on Long Point Ave. The braying of a donkey at the F. B. Maxwell summer home caused a horse owned by Charles S. Clark and driven by his sister, Mrs. Tappan, to bolt.

The runaway threw Mrs. Tappan to the side of the road and she was taken in an unconscious state into the house of Mrs. Lucy Winsor. A physician was summoned and she was removed to her home in South Duxbury, where it was found that her arm was broken in 2 places. She is resting comfortably.

In the meantime the horse galloped with the gig into the yards of Mrs. John Irwin and Mrs. Moulton, went through a picket fence and to the main road again. The gig was reduced to kindling, but the horse was unharmed.

Many horses have great fear of donkeys; even the sight of one on the main road will throw them into a panic. This donkey, owned by Mr. Maxwell, has already frightened several of the local animals since his arrival a few weeks ago.